

These last few weeks I have held eight town hall meetings in communities across the First Congressional District. I've listened to many Nebraskans share their concerns about our nation's precarious fiscal situation and the brokenness in Washington. While people have very different ideas about how we best address our debt and improve the economy, most everyone agrees that moving forward will require courage, creativity, and sacrifice.

Last Wednesday, I hosted Mr. David Walker, former U.S. Comptroller General, for a town hall meeting in Lincoln. David is one of our nation's leading voices on budgetary reform. For years, he has been warning anyone who would listen about the risks associated with our federal government's spending and budgeting practices. He served in both the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush administrations, directing the Government Accountability Office (GAO), which investigates how the federal government spends taxpayer dollars. He now engages the American public on the impacts of our national debt and need for budgetary reform as the head of an organization called the Comeback America Initiative.

His presentation was energetic, thoughtful, and engaging. One interesting set of analysis shows America ranked 28th among nations in a "fiscal fitness index." By way of comparison, Mexico is 18th. On a bright note, in a ranking of states, Nebraska is third best in terms of living by its funding obligations. A video of the entire meeting will soon be available at my website, Fortenberry.house.gov.

Walker's forthright message -- without major reforms by 2022 future revenues will only cover Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and the interest on our debt -- includes policy proposals that recognize the need for creative thinking in both spending and tax reform. As Walker said, "Everything must be on the table" -- and it will require the willingness of all Americans to put special-interest constraints aside and come together to do what is necessary to set America back on a fiscally sustainable course, improving economic opportunities for all citizens.

I thank all of you who joined me at this event and the other community town halls. While the discourse was often lively and spirited, it was also civil, constructive, and valuable to me as your federal representative. For those in Washington to begin to work collaboratively to address the needs of the country, the continued input and encouragement of engaged citizens will be critical. These past two weeks provided a great reminder of the Nebraska approach to solving big problems: be smart, be resourceful, and work until the job is done.

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